

The Pastor's Report

Howdy folks! Without intending any disrespect to T.S. Eliot, I would beg to differ as to the cruelest month. I cannot imagine a worse month than what this March has turned out to be. Wow. From heart-warming highs in the 60s to bone chilling wind temperatures and fierce wind (chills) the very next morning. Soul crushing. It feels as if spring will never arrive. The truth, though, is that the transition to spring has already begun, and in earnest. Moreover, it has been going on unnoticed right under our noses, and for quite a little while now.

As I have done with regularity for almost 40 years, a few weeks back (at the end of February) I was speaking to my horse-logger/woods-hippie/practitioner of the weird friend, Mark Adams. Usually one of us will call the other every few weeks just to catch up and check in. Occasionally we will call with breaking news which requires prayer/energy and a listening ear, or to share some recent sign of the weird into which we may have recently bumped. As is the case with most people who call Minnesota home, each and every conversation (regardless of the time of year) must include a discussion of the weather. Preferably with coffee in hand.

I was grouching about how the winter was dragging on. For Mark, any season without mosquitos is a blessing. I happened to be standing at the dining room window at the cottage which overlooks a couple of birch trees and, since he is a "tree guy," I asked him about these long, thin

things I saw springing up out of the top of every branch. Mark said, "Oh, you are *way* ahead of us (seasonally) you already have catkins emerging."

Turns out that catkins are *the wind-pollinated, cylindrical flowers of the birch tree* (along with willows and hazels) *typically appearing in early spring (March-May) when the tree is otherwise bare as 4-5 cm long yellow-brown male clusters, alongside smaller, erect female catkins* (which is what I was seeing). Who knew?!? Beyond the interesting silvicultural lesson, the broader take-away for me was that the transition from one season to the next necessarily begins *long* before we realize it.



TRANSITION

At last month's Session meeting an Elder asked about the process for calling a new pastor.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see a report from the Manse Committee. These are ecclesiastical "catkins" which signal that transition is afoot. Which, like the coming of spring, is a transition to be celebrated.

It is my opinion that we are currently living through a time of congregational stability, prosperity, and harmony as a result of a healthy, long-term pastorate. A so-called, "Golden Age" if you will. Such a season calls us to three tasks. First, to celebrate and truly enjoy the fruits of our labors. Second to "make hay" while the sun is shining. Third, to begin to reimagine what this church will become in the next season, along with what will be required to get there.

With you in the turning of the world,
Rev. Mike

